SKINNER ENG R. JOHN KIRBY GOSSE INV R.

H.14.b.64
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A

SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE

OF THAT NOTORIOUS

HOUSE-BREAKER, HORSE-STEALER,

AND

HIGHWAY ROBBER,

JOHN KIRBY;

WHO WAS CONVICTED,

At the OLD CASTLE, CANTERBURY,

On TUESDAY the 13th of January, 1789,

FOR STEALING FOUR GEESE,

And ſentenced to be Tranſported for SEVEN YEARS.

TOGETHER WITH

An authentic and circumſtantial Account of every ROBBERY he hath committed,

From the YEAR 17[illegible] to the preſent Time,

As Related by HIMSELF,

And atteſted as TRUE, before two reſpectable Witneſſes.

CANTERBURY:

PRINTED BY J. GROVE, AT THE GENERAL PRINTING-OFFICE, NEXT THE GUILDHALL, HIGH-STREET;
AND SOLD BY W. BRISTOW, MESS. SIMMONS AND KIRKBY; AND MESS. FLACKTON, MARRABLE, AND CLARIS; AND ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS IN KENT.

M,DCC,LXXXIX.

[Price SIX-PENCE.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

To the READER.

BEHOLD my wretched Life!--Behold my Puniſhment, due reward of my crimes.---The Law hath ſpoken.---Loaded with fetters, I muſt forſake my native home and ramble on the dangerous ocean, till I reach an almoſt unknown land, wherein I am to be kept, for ſeven years, to hard labour, under the rod of unmerciful leaders.---Thoſe morſels of bread I ſhall eat, are to be earned with great trouble and bathed with tears of ſorrow! Tremble, ye Youth, who are going to read my diſhoneſt adventures, and beg of GOD the ſtrength to avoid doing

doing the leaſt miſchief, or to do any thing that is diſpleaſing to Him;---have always preſent to your mind this little but true Proverb: "*Keep good company*, "*and good you ſhall be*;" for as Solomon ſays, Prov. xxiii, v. 28, "*He that has no rule over his own* "*ſpirit, is like a city that is broken* "*down, and without walls.*" May the diſcovering of my vices and the deſcription of my deſerved puniſhment induce you to liſten to the good advice of your friends ---make you ſhudder at the only name of Thieving, and my expectation in publiſhing this will be fully anſwered.

22 JY 69

From my Ward in
St. Dunſtan's Gaol,
February, 1789.

J. KIRBY.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF JOHN KIRBY.

I WAS born of honeſt and induſtrious parents, in the pariſh of Saints Coſmus and Damian, in the Blean, near Canterbury, in the county of Kent, on St. Andrew's day, in the year 1766. At a proper age I was ſent to ſchool, with my brothers, to learn to read; for, tho' my father was brought up to huſbandry buſineſs, he was deſirous to give us all the learning his circumſtances would admit of. I have four brothers and one ſiſter, all of whom, by liſtening to the good advice of my father, who was a plain well meaning man, and beloved by his neighbours) they

learnt to read, and are reſpected by their friends and acquaintance, for their honeſty, ſobriety, and induſtry. However good their example, it made no impreſſion on a mind naturally bent on an idle and diſſolute courſe of life. Nothing appeared ſo painful, or ſo diſagreeable as to learn to read. I generally played the truant, taking to the fields or woods after the hounds; or following the carriages to and from Whitſtable for the ſake of a ride. The good precepts of my parents, I totally diſregarded, and, when out of their ſight, turned to ridicule. My father, perceiving my diſpoſition, as ſoon as I was of proper age, took me to work with him in the woods, which I continued till his death. When that unfortunate event happened I was about ſixteen years of age, and then neceſſitated to be at home with my mother. From that time till I was ſeventeen, I occaſionally went to fodder the cattle, and do other out-door work at Mrs. Cullen's, who lived near my mother, making myſelf happy in aſſiſting the widow; and might have continued in that agreeable ſituation for ſome time, had not my wicked imagination tempted me to rob my benefactreſs:

One day, in the abſence of the family, ſeeing ſome ſilver ſpoons, left in a careleſs manner on a table, I took that opportunity to ſteal one ta-

ble

ble and one tea ſpoon, which I put in my pocket, and ſold the next day to a perſon in Canterbury for 1s. 8d. Mrs. Cullen ſuſpecting me to be the perſon who had committed the theft, deſired I would come no more to her houſe.

The ſucceſs I met with in my firſt attempt, encouraged my wicked intentions; and having no inclination to work, went to Canterbury, aſſociated with ſeveral young men of abandoned characters, who ſupported their extravagancies by petty thefts; they ſoon introduced me into the company of ſeveral of the moſt common proſtitutes, on whom I ſpent what little money I had from my mother and the produce of the ſpoons. My companions being in the ſame neceſſitous circumſtances, we conſulted together on the beſt means to raiſe the Bit, (a cant term for money) and from the information I had given them, we reſolved to rob Mr. Edward Sandy, of Blean, that evening.

About ten o'clock that night, I and four others, beſet the houſe, ſtationed in different quarters to prevent a ſurprize, and ſtole out of the lodge, nine couple of fowls, and out of the ſtable a pair of boot-ſhoes, and made off undiſcovered. On our way home we learnt, that a tythe-feaſt was kept that even-

ing at the Hare and Hounds, on the Common, and ſeeing Mr. Foreman and another neighbour go into the houſe, I thought we had a good opportunity of doing a little more buſineſs: It was then agreed, that I and another ſhould attempt his lodge, which we ſoon after did, and ſtole thereout four geeſe; one of them making a noiſe, it alarmed Mr. Foreman's man, who, running out of the houſe in his ſhirt, towards Mr. Bird's, a neighbour, he ſaw one of us come out of the lodge, but, while he was calling to Mr. Bird, I whiſpered to my companion to get off, then took the geeſe into the wood, where I concealed them, and immediately ran to the Hare and Hounds, and called for a pint of beer.—While I was drinking it, Mr. Foreman's ſervant and Mr. Bird came in, and informed the company that Mr. Foreman's lodge had been robbed of four geeſe; that they ſaw one of the thieves, but was not able to take him; and, turning to me, ſaid, if they had not ſeen me there, they ſhould have ſuſpected that I was one of them.—The fowls we afterwards ſold at Canterbury for 1s. 8d. a couple, the geeſe for 2s. and the ſhoes for 20d. which money, we agreed, ſhould go to a joint ſtock, for the benefit of all.

As I became a wholeſale dealer in fowls, my thoughts turned on cock-fighting; and hearing

hearing of a match that was to be fought on Box-day at the R— E——, in St. Mildred's, Canterbury, I ſtole a game-cock from out of Mr. Twyman's yard, at Blean, had him cut out of his feathers, and for 5s. lent him to a friend to fight one battle for a guinea: The cock beat, and fought a ſecond battle, when he again conquered, and I received 2s. 6d. more. I then took the cock home, and turned him into the yard from whence I had ſtolen him.— The cock was ſo altered by being cut out of his feathers, that Mr. Twyman did not know him again, and thought he was a ſtrange cock that came among his hens. About a fortnight after, I ſtole the ſame cock again, and fought him at the ſame place, where he was killed in the ſecond battle.

After this, I ſtole a bitch from Edward Sandy's, and a dog, the property of Mr. Wootton, from Peyton's, at Blean; led them to Folkſtone, where I ſold them for 7s. 6d. and had a puppy given me into the bargain. On my return to Canterbury, I ſold the puppy to a huntſman, at the Compaſſes, in St. Peter's, for 5s.

The next morning going to the Old Park, I obſerved a pack of hounds, belonging, I believe, to Mr. Dean, and took an opportunity when I ſaw the dogs were tired, to decoy a

liver coloured one, with a white circle round his body, and a red and white bitch from the pack; this was the more eaſily done, as I never failed to carry a compoſition which would entice any dog to follow me. I alſo took thoſe to Folkſtone, and ſold them to my former chapman for 5s. each. He then informed me, he ſhould be glad if I could help him to an old horſe to feed his dogs; I told him I could, and would bring him one the next morning; taking my leave, I returned home, and the ſame evening went into Broomfield, near Blean church, and ſtole thereout Mr. Smith's mare, which I rode to Folkſtone, arriving there about eight o'clock in the morning, when I received 14s. for her. She was immediately killed, the ſkin taken off, and quartered. This was done, as I afterwards learnt, to prevent a diſcovery. As I had executed my commiſſion with punctuality, he gave me the greateſt encouragement, and aſked me if I could help him to any more dogs? Knowing that I had two, which I had ſtolen from the ſubſcription pack, ſhut up at home, I told him I could, and would bring them to Folkſtone the next day. I was as good as my word, and received 7s. 6d. for each. They were ſoon after ſhipped for France.

As I had now plenty of money, I thought

of

of ſpending a day or two at Folkſtone, with my friend, but one morning hearing the cry of the hounds, I joined in my favorite diverſion. After the hunt, I watched an opportunity, got into the kennel, and brought off undiſcovered, two dogs, the one named Famous, the other Doxey, brought them ſafe to Canterbury, and ſold them for 8s. At that time I had a puppy, which I had ſtolen a ſhort time before, and which, as I was informed afterwards, belonged to the ſame huntſman to whom I had ſold Famous and Doxey; with this puppy and a noted bitch of my own, I returned to Folkſtone, ſold the puppy for 3s. and left the bitch in care of my friend to hunt with.

I now began to think ſeriouſly of my crimes, and determined within myſelf, to leave off theſe wicked proceedings, and endeavour to get my living by honeſt means; however, returning to Canterbury, I unfortunately met with ſome of my old companions, in great diſtreſs, without money, or even victuals. They propoſed to go out with me that evening; at firſt I gave them a denial, ſaying, I was ſorry for what I had done, and was reſolved to leave off; but their earneſt intreaties ſoon overpowered my reaſon, and, at laſt, conſented to go with them.

About

About nine o'clock that night, we went to Mr. Sandy's, at Blean, (whom I had robbed before) and having hid myſelf on the gratten-wall, heard Mr. Sandy ſay to his waggoner, "As they ha'nt been here for two nights, "I don't think they'll come to-night." By this, I was ſure ſome of my companions had been here before. The waggoner, however, perſuaded his maſter to take the fowls into the houſe, which, after a little conſideration, he complied with. I then took notice of the place where they hid the key, which was in a hole in the wall. When they had been in bed about an hour, I went to the hole, and took the key of the back door, by means of which we entered the waſh-houſe, and ſtole from thence nineteen fowls, leaving only an old cock and a ſtag, with which we got ſafe off, and ſold them the ſame evening to a perſon in Canterbury, for 1s. 6d, a couple. The next evening I ſtole eight couple and half of rabbits, out of Mr. Fleet's ſtowage, at Wild-court, and ſold them to the ſame perſon.

Two or three nights after, I ſtole from Mr. Lawſon, at the Hare and Hounds, on the Common, two geeſe, which I ſold to a publican without Weſtgate, Canterbury. Mr. Lawſon happening to call at the houſe ſoon after, ſaw the geeſe, and knowing them to be thoſe he had loſt, occaſioned a diſcovery, for

for which I was apprehended, and committed the 23d of November, 1783, for the firſt time, to St. Dunſtan's gaol, to take my trial for the ſame at the next Quarter Seſſions, held at the Old Caſtle, Canterbury, where I was acquitted.

When I came out of priſon, the pariſh officers of Blean bought me ſome tools, and I went to work in the woods for two or three months, till Mutton (an old companion of mine) called to ſee me. We went to the Red Lion, on the Common, and having ſtaid there till all our money was ſpent, we ſurveyed the houſe, obſerving what things we could beſt carry off, and where we could get in. The next morning, about four o'clock, ſeeing the waggoner leave the back door on the latch, while he went to get up his horſes, we entered the houſe, and ſtole three hams out of the chimney, a large table ſpoon, a tea ſpoon, and about half a pint of halfpence out of the cupboard, and got clear off. The hams we ſold in the Borough, Canterbury, for 5d. a pound; and having ſpent all the money, we parted.

At a dance at the Hare and Hounds, at Blean, I ſnatched a handkerchief out of the hand of a maid-ſervant who lived with Mr. Strood, at the Red Lion, on the Whitſtable road, with no intention to keep it; and the next

next day went to Strood's houſe, with the handkerchief about my neck, that it might be noticed by the maid, to whom I intended to give it; but, while I was drinking, Strood's ſon obſerved the handkerchief, and told his father, who aſked me how I came by it, when I told him the truth, and the reaſon for putting it about my neck; but, on the maid being queſtioned, and denying having the handkerchief, I was taken before Colonel Webb, and, on the 16th of July, 1784, was committed to St. Dunſtan's gaol, to be tried at Maidſtone aſſizes; but no bill being found againſt me, I was diſcharged by proclamation.

Mutton, who happened to be tried at the ſame aſſizes, for ſtealing wearing apparel from his fellow ſervant, and acquitted, came away from Maidſtone with me, and, on our way home we conſulted together on the beſt method we could take to be revenged of Strood, for proſecuting me for an offence of which I was really innocent. About three days after our return, we attempted his houſe, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, and endeavoured to get in at the uſual place, but finding that well ſecured, we took an iron bar from the cellar window, and got into the cellar, where we found a ſack. The door of the cellar being locked, we were obliged

obliged to break that open to get into the waſh-houſe, and another lock to get into the milk-houſe, where we ſtole about four ſcore of pork, leaving one piece behind, for fear the family might want a dinner; cutting the leather hinges of a cupboard door, we took it down, and from thence we took two bottles of brandy, and two of geneva, a pair of ſtockings from off the dreſſer, and a pair of ſhoes belonging to the waggoner. After we had filled our ſack, we made off to Canterbury, and ſold the pork to our correſpondent in the Borough.

As my friend at Folkſtone had forfeited his word by not returning my bitch, which I had left with him, I went there for her, and not only brought back my own bitch, named Stroller, but ſtole the puppy I had before ſold to him, and another bitch, named Pleaſant. Paſſing through Canterbury the next day, with my three dogs, I ſold the puppy to the huntſman from whom I had before ſtolen it, for 5s. Having rounded his ears and docked his tail, he did not know him to be his own. Pleaſant I ſold for 2s. 6d. at Hearn-hill. The huntſman afterwards having ſome ſuſpicion that the puppy which I had lately ſold him, was the ſame which he had ſometime before bought of me, but had loſt it a few days after, queſtioned me about it, and, on his

his promiſe not to mention it to his maſter, I confeſſed, that I had ſtolen it from him, and ſold it to a perſon at Folkſtone, from whom I had again ſtolen it, and, had now ſold it the ſecond time to him. The next day I ſtole a couple of hounds from Mr. Hammond, at Stone-houſe, and ſold them for 9s.

Mr. Wootton, of Chartham, having, as I have before-mentioned, loſt his dog, named Ruler, at Peyton's, at Blean, applied to me, and offered to give me 5s. if I would inform him where he might find him; I told him the dog was in the ſubſcription pack at Folkſtone, where he afterwards found him. He gave me the 5s. and deſired me to leave off this wicked courſe of life.

That afternoon Mutton calling on me at my mother's, we went to Strood's, at the Red Lion, and ſtayed playing at cards, till near twelve o'clock, during which time, William Bentley, of Whitſtable, drank ſeveral pots of bumbo with us, till he was intoxicated, when he laid down on the bench, at the door for ſome time, to recover himſelf; and ſhortly after took out his purſe to pay his ſhare of the reckoning, when Mutton obſerved that he had ſeveral guineas in it, and, taking me aſide, propoſed to DO him

on

on the road. At firſt I was afraid, leſt I ſhould be known; but Mutton having two paper maſks and two black gaberdines with him, told me he would diſguiſe me in ſuch a manner as to prevent diſcovery. After diſcharging our reckoning, we went away, Mr. Bentley taking the high road to Whitſtable, we the road acroſs the fields, and, meeting him on Clapham-hill, Mutton preſented a horſe-piſtol to his head, demanding his money, or he would blow his brains out.—Mr. Bentley immediately threw a green ſilk purſe, containing four guineas and a half, and a ſixpence, with a hole in it, into his hat. We then made off, and Mr. Bentley proceeded on his way to Whitſtable. Before we parted, we went to the Crown and Thiſtle, in St. Peter's, Canterbury, and ſpent near two guineas of the money on the ladies of the town.

I was now ſent for, to make one, in a match of running, at Whitſtable; but, before I ſet off, Mutton came to me, and aſked me to go with him to Appledore; I excuſed myſelf till the running was over, and he went with me to that place.—A little before ſtarting, one Henry York, who had a pair of large ſilver buckles in his ſhoes, upbraided me of my infamous courſe of life, for which I was reſolved to be revenged; and, watch-

ing a favourable opportunity, I took his ſhoes and buckles, hid them under my looſe great coat, and running ſwiftly up a hill, concealed them in a buſh; and returning immediately, without the leaſt ſuſpicion, began running. After the match was over, the young man miſſed his ſhoes, and finding myſelf ſuſpected, went early away, leaving Mutton, though innocent, to receive what was intended for me—a ſevere drubbing.—I ſold the buckles for 17s. giving Mutton part, and wore the ſhoes myſelf.

The next day my brother and the young man, traced us to a houſe of ill fame in Knott's-lane, Canterbury, where my brother challenged me with having the ſhoes then on; upon which I knocked him down with a broom-ſtick, and a general engagement enſued, but we had the good fortune to eſcape. After telling Mutton where I would meet him the next day, I went home and went to bed; but I had not been long there, before my brother and York entered the houſe, with ſticks, and beat me as I laid; but ſnatching up a bill, (which I had previouſly concealed in caſe I was attacked) and ſwearing I would chop their heads off, they ran away, I followed, and coming up with one of them, knocked him down.—The noiſe this occaſioned, terribly frightened an old woman that lived

ived in the next houſe, who coming out to know what was the matter, I ſwore, if ſhe did not immediately go in, I would throw her into the pond, which was near. The old woman ſwore the peace againſt me the next day, and I was again committed to St. Dunſtan's gaol, and, at the enſuing ſeſſions, was ſentenced to remain in priſon till the next quarter ſeſſions; but, on going back to goal, I ſlipt off my hand-cuffs, and got clear away.

Immediately after, I ſtole three couple of fowls from Mr. Anderſon, at Dean-ſtrood Common, and a mare aſs and foal (the property of William Taylor) from Tyler-hill. Sold the aſs and foal for 9s. and the fowls for 5s. at Boughton.

Returning from thence, I ſtole from off a hedge at Tyler-hill, three ſhirts, one of which I ſold for 3s. at Boughton;—the other two I had on my back when I was taken at Oſpringe, by two poſt-boys, who, (on our way to Canterbury) ſtopped at the Red Lion, half-way houſe, where I ſeized a bill which lay in the window, and threatening them with death if they purſued, I made my eſcape.

About three days after, I was taken again at Judge-folly-hill, by the ſame poſt-boys, who brought me back to St. Dunſtan's gaol, when

I was taken before Col. Webb, for ſtealing Mr. Calver's ſhirts, at Tyler-hill, who lodged a detainer againſt me the 28th of October, for which I was to be tried, at the Old Caſtle, Canterbury, but no bill being found, I was diſcharged.

Falling into company with Mutton, a few days after, and knowing how dangerous it was for me to ſtay here, we agreed to go into Suſſex, and, at Cow-bridge, where Mutton had formerly lived, we ſtole out of a ſtable, belonging to a farmer, a black flag'd tail mare, which we ſold to our friend at Folk-ſtone, for ſeven guineas, tho' worth ſixteen. She was ſent to France.

From thence we went to Canterbury, and lived in common with our companions, till every farthing was ſpent, when we returned to Blean, and, in the night, broke open Mr. Strood's houſe, at the Red Lion, and ſtole from thence five ſcore of laying pork, which we ſold to our old correſpondent *Roſy* P. in the Borough, Canterbury, for 4d. a pound.

The next day I entered by myſelf Mrs. Cullen's houſe, at Blean, while ſhe was milking, and ſtole a red cloak, two white aprons, and one white muſlin apron worked with flowers. The widow, a few days after, declaring,

claring, while she was drinking tea with my mother (I being present,) she would forgive the thief, if she could but recover her flowered apron. To appease the old lady, I tied it to her back door the same evening, where she found it in the morning. The things I sold to our old merchant in the Borough, for 11s. 6d. Hearing that she suspected her girl, who was put out by the parish, I took an opportunity, when she was again at my mother's, to tell her, I was the person who tied her apron to her door, by which she might guess who had the rest of her things.

Two or three days after B——, myself, and another, stole out of Mr. Strood's barn, two sacks of wheat, and brought it on the back of a horse we took out of the stable about a mile, when, seeing two asses on the Common, we returned the horse to the place from whence we had taken him, and loaded the asses with a sack each, and brought it to Canterbury, where White sold it for 3s. a bushel. The same night we stole two half-ankers of geneva, from William Sandy's, at Harbledown, and brought them off in a sack; but Sandy going into the house where we left the sack, and seeing it behind the door, knew it to be his, then sending for a constable, had me secured till Mr. Strood came, to whom I confessed stealing the wheat with B——. We

were then taken before Mr. Duncombe, who committed us on the 24th of November, 1784, to St. Dunſtan's gaol, to be tried at the Old Caſtle, Canterbury, where, being convicted, I was ſentenced to be whipped twice at the cart's tail, B—— once, and one month's impriſonment.

About this time a report was ſpread that Mr. May's houſe, in the High-ſtreet, Canterbury, had been broke open, and a great quantity of ſhop goods ſtolen, when I infamouſly declared myſelf and another to be the perſons who committed that robbery, but, fortunately for the young man, the real perſons were diſcovered before I was permitted to be ſworn, which, I really believe, at *that* time, I ſhould have done, had an oath been adminiſtered to me. It may be aſked, what reaſon can I give for ſuch baſe behaviour? I can give none—nor was I able at that time, to give any; but ever ſince I have lamented the wickedneſs of my attempt, and am now very ſorry for that tranſaction.

When I was diſcharged, I went home, and received every encouragement from the Pariſh Officers to go to work, and leave off this dangerous buſineſs, particularly from Mr. Fleet and his family, which I did for three months; when, going into the houſe of one Hobday,

Hobday, a thatcher, with whom I had been drinking, and ſeeing him give his wife half a guinea to go market with, who put it on the corner of the mantle-piece, I was tempted to contrive ſome method to take it. Having taken our leave, we ſet off to work; but on the road I loitered behind until he was out of ſight, and ſeeing his wife go out of the back door to a pond for water, I ran back, and entered the houſe, took the half guinea from off the mantle-piece unperceived, and immediately followed her huſband to work, without any ſuſpicion; but ſometime afterwards, hearing that he had uſed his wife ill upon that account, I frankly owned that I had taken it, but he would not believe me.

After this, I went to Swinfield Minnis, and ſtole three couple of geeſe, brought them to Canterbury, and ſold them for 2s. a couple.

About this time I met with my old acquaintance Mutton, and having ſtayed together till all our money was ſpent, I went to John Pym's, at Blean, and getting in at the back window, ſtole out of the cupboard, a ſilver tea-ſpoon, two or three pounds of bacon, and a red cloak. The ſpoon marked I. E. I ſold for 1s. 3d. and the Cloak for 2s. 6d.

At

At Thomas Cullen's, at Blean, I ſtole two couple of geeſe, and three couple of fowls, which I ſold to my conſtant cuſtomer at the uſual price.

From the widow Wilkinſon's, at Blean, I ſtole three couple of fowls, and ſold them to Soames, for 1s. 6d. a couple.—I likewiſe agreed with him for a couple of geeſe, and told him I would put them in a lodge on St. Thomas's Hill, where he found them the next day; but on his offering them for ſale at an under price, he and the geeſe were ſtopped, and, on enquiry, they were found to belong to Mr. Lawſon, of Blean.—Soames was afterwards tried for that offence, (ſuppoſing he had ſtolen them) and being convicted, was ſentenced to be whipped at the cart's tail.

Leaving Mutton at Canterbury, I went, a few days after, to Whitſtable, and ſtole a Fluſhing jacket, which hung near the Salt-pans, and a pair of ſea-boots, belonging to Thomas Webb. Sold the jacket at Canterbury for 14s. and the boots for 4s. 6d.

Mutton and I then went to Swaicliff, to hunt rabbits, where we ſaw ſeveral ſhirts hung on a line in a garden, and, while the family were at dinner, we ſtole nine new ſhirts,

ſhirts, which we got clear off with, and ſold them in Canterbury for 3s. each.

As we were drinking at a public-houſe in Canterbury, Mrs. Brett, of Blean, came in, and being informed that her buſineſs to town was to receive about twenty-ſeven guineas for hay, which ſhe had previouſly ſold, I told Mutton, we had a good opportunity to *Do* the old lady, in the evening; he was of the ſame opinion; and that very night, about ten o'clock, we infeſted the houſe, and entered the pantry, by getting thro' the pantry window, from thence to the waſh houſe, into the fore-room, and up ſtairs, forcing open in our way, four doors, which were properly ſecured with good locks. The noiſe awakened Mrs. Widdet, who, thinking the cows were breaking in, called out as loud as ſhe could to Mrs. Brett, who was deaf, and ſlept in the next room. So far from being afraid of a diſcovery, I could not forbear laughing, when Mutton ſwore, if I did not leave off he would break my neck down ſtairs, then, in a rage, burſt open the door, entered her chamber, and ſwore he would blow her brains out if ſhe ſpoke another word, demanding her keys and money, which ſhe, with the greateſt terror in her looks, complied with. He then took from her two half guineas, two gold rings from off her fingers,

fingers, and about 7s. or 8s. in ſilver; we then proceeded to ſearch the drawers, where we found ſix ſilver tea-ſpoons, four table-ſpoons, and one very large ſpoon, marked with her father's and mother's names. Mrs. Widdet earneſtly begged to have that ſpoon returned her; but Mutton ſwore if he did not find the money he was in ſearch of, ſhe ſhould not have one thing left. Bad as I was, I could not help feeling for the diſtreſs I had occaſioned, and took an opportunity, unſeen by my companion, to throw the ſpoon to her on the bed. We then attempted to enter Mrs. Brett's room, which was ſo ſtrongly ſecured with bolts, locks, and cheſts, that we were obliged, by violence, to break through a pannel in the middle of the door, when Mrs. Brett ſhrieked out, "For God's ſake don't hurt me." Mutton told her, if ſhe ſpoke again he would blow her brains out. She then wrapt herſelf round in the bed clothes, and reſigned herſelf to our mercy. At this moment a party of ſmugglers rode up to the houſe, and we began to be afraid of being taken; but, placing myſelf at the head of one of the women, and Mutton at the other, we prevented them from crying out; meanwhile the ſmugglers (who wanted only refreſhment) got off their horſes cloſe to the windows, and, after ſtaying about a quarter of an hour, mounted again and rode off.

Findin

Finding ourſelves out of danger, we began to rifle her pockets, and found 18s. or 19s. five gold rings we took off her fingers, and breaking open her drawers, found two large ſilver ſpoons, and ſix tea-ſpoons, and, at the bottom of a cheſt, a purſe with eight or nine half-crowns, and a remarkable crown-piece. As we could not find the caſh we were in ſearch of, Mutton aſked her where the money was ſhe had received that day at Canterbury for the hay? She replied, "I did receive it, but left it with Col. Webb."—We then were reſolved to carry off every thing that was valuable, and having broken open another cheſt, found two ſilver mugs, and a piece of India handkerchiefs; returning down ſtairs, we examined the cupboards, and finding ſome beef-ſtakes and cucumbers, we ſat down and made a hearty meal, drinking about half a bottle of gin; we then went off with our booty and buried the plate between ſome bean rows in the Forty Acres, near St. Dunſtan's, Canterbury—After we had divided the money, Mutton went to Canterbury, and I returned home.—The next morning I was taken in bed by a Conſtable, and carried before a Magiſtrate, on ſuſpicion of being an accomplice in the robbery; but, while I was there, Mr. Hatton, the Keeper of St. Dunſtan's gaol, came in, and informed the Magiſtrate that he had taken

ken Mutton, at his ſiſter's, in Turn-again-lane, and, on ſearching him, he had found a remarkable crown-piece. I then turned evidence, told where the plate was hid, and every particular relating to the robbery. To confirm what I had ſaid, Mr. Hatton took me to the place where I had mentioned the plate was hid, and found every thing to be true as I related. Mutton was then committed to take his trial for the robbery, and I as an evidence againſt him. At the next Aſſizes he was capitally convicted, and afterwards hung on Penenden Heath.—I was ſentenced to remain in gaol for twelve months, or find ſureties for my good behaviour; which being out of my power, I remained in priſon.

Tho' I turned evidence againſt Mutton, and was the cauſe of his being convicted, he bore me no ill will, and frequently converſed with me in the moſt friendly terms. The morning, before he was executed, he talked with me for near two hours, giving me the beſt advice, and particularly begged of me to leave off going into the company of bad women, for, "you know, Jack," ſaid he, "that keeping their company has brought "me to this, and will likewiſe bring you, "ſooner or later, if you don't ſhun them."—This was too true, for when I worked, I wanted for no money or friends, and thieved chiefly

chiefly to ſupply their endleſs wants.—If the Magiſtrates would ſeriouſly endeavour to diſcourage their nocturnal meetings, it would ſave them a great deal of trouble, and prevent many a young man from coming to the gallows.

As ſoon as I got home, the Pariſh Officers new clothed me, and I went again to work till Michaelmas, when I unluckily made a match with Mr. Twyman's waggoner to fight a cock with him for half a guinea and a ſupper ;—I ſay unluckily, becauſe if I had not done that, I ſhould have continued my work, and not been guilty of any more thieving.—Having no cock of my own, and knowing that my antagoniſt had two, I thought it no bad ſcheme to borrow one of his, and the ſame evening ſtole his beſt cock, which I left with a friend of mine in St. Mildred's, Canterbury, who kept him till the time of fighting, when I beat, and received the half guinea. The waggoner was ſo pleaſed with my cock that he gave me half-a crown for him. Forgetting the good advice of my deceaſed friend, I again fell into company with ſome of my old female companions, on whom I ſoon ſpent all my money, and to raiſe more I went in the night to Mr. Twyman's, at Blean, and while the family were at ſupper, entered the ſtable and ſtole a pair of pumps,

a waiſtcoat and a frock; from thence I pro-
ceeded to the hen-houſe and ſtole one couple
of fowls, and one couple of ducks. Sold
the pumps for 4s. 6d. to a pawn-broker; the
fowls and ducks I treated my ladies with.

The ſame week I ſtole from Thomas Cul-
len's, at Blean, three geeſe; ſold them at
Canterbury for 6s.

The next day being ſeen by Mr. Twy-
man, in a wood behind his houſe, with a few
bundles of wood which had hedge-ſtakes in
them, he followed me to Canterbury and
prevented me from ſelling them. The next
morning I was taken before a Magiſtrate for
taking the ſtakes out of the hedge, and fined
10s. but was allowed three days to pay it in;
however, I went off to Haſtenleigh, and
about day-light broke into the ſhop of Mr.
Swain, by getting in at the ſhop window, and
carried off the till, which contained only 5s.
in half-pence, and one ſix-pence.

In my way home I went to Waltham, and
at a farm-houſe, by means of ſome ſtairs that
were on the outſide, I got into a chamber
and ſtole one pair of ſheets and two great
coats. Sold the ſheets and coats at Aſhford
for 11s.

On my return to Canterbury I feaſted away among my ladies till all my money was gone, then went to

S—— Farm, on the way to Herne, and from off a line ſtole ſix ſhirts, which I brought to Canterbury and ſold for 1s. 6d. each.

From thence went to White Hill, at Kennington, and broke open the ſtable door of Mr. Gizzard, and ſtole a great coat, a long round frock, a waggon whip, pair of ſhoes, and an oil bruſh. Sold the coat, frock, and ſhoes, for 7s. at Aſhford: the whip I brought home, and ſold to a waggoner for 1s. 6d.

The ſame evening, at Mrs. Wilkinſon's at Blean, I ſtole three couple and half of fowls. —Sold them for 1s. 6d. a couple, at Canterbury, and ſtaid there till I had loſt all my money at cards; then went to Robert Hayward's, in the Wood, St. Stephen's, and ſtole two geeſe; but being diſcovered and purſued, I dropped one, and got off with the other. Although I had ſuch a narrow eſcape, I then went to Mrs. Cullen's, at Blean, and ſtole two geeſe and brought them ſafe to Canterbury.

Soon after I went with one of my com-

panions to Mr. Sankey's, at Milton Chapel, where we arrived about eight o'clock at night, and ſeeing two boys in the ſtable, and the waggoner and his mate go to bed, my companion went into the kitchen (the family being in another room) but ſoon returned, declaring he was afraid to proceed; ſhewing me the way up ſtairs, I ſoon entered the chamber, and, while the waggoner and his mate were ſleeping, I took a watch from off the head of the bed, two pair of ſtockings, and one ſilk handkerchief, and got clear off—Sold the coat for 3s. pawned the ſtockings for 2s. the ſilk handkerchief for 1s. 6d. and ſold the watch for 11s. We then returned to our uſual houſe of rendezvous at Canterbury, and ſpent all the money.

Afterwards I went to William Stone's houſe, near Blean, and, by taking a pane of glaſs out of the window, got into the houſe, from whence I ſtole two ſhirts, one round frock, part of a meat pye, two plumb puddings, and part of a breaſt of mutton. I ſold the ſhirts for 2s. each; the gabberdine White ſold for me for 2s. at M———, near Canterbury.

About twelve o'clock the ſame night, I got into the hen-houſe of John Dove, at Blean, and ſtole one fowl; but as I was coming

coming away, Mr. Dove and another man ſuddenly ſeized me, and kept me priſoner all that night. The next morning I was taken before a Magiſtrate, and committed Feb. 7, 1787, to St. Dunſtan's gaol, to be tried at the next Aſſizes for that offence. I was likewiſe ordered to be publicly whipt for running away and not paying the 10s. I was before fined for ſtealing Mr. Twyman's hedge-ſtakes. Beſides this, another affair of more ſerious conſequence, came againſt me. On the Saturday following, as Mrs. Stone, the wife of William Stone, whoſe houſe I had broke open, was going to market, ſhe ſaw the round frock I had ſtolen hanging at a ſaleſman's door in St. Dunſtan's, and on enquiry found it to be the ſame which White had ſold for me, and who, upon being taken up, informed the Magiſtrate from whom he had it. A detainer was then laid againſt me for breaking open William Stone's houſe.—When the Aſſizes came on, I had the good fortune to be acquitted for ſtealing the fowl; and was immediately arraigned for breaking into the houſe of William Stone, and ſtealing two ſhirts, &c. but Stone ſaying that his houſe ſtood in the pariſh of St. Coſmus and Damian, in the Blean, I begged leave of the Judge to inform him, that Stone's houſe, which he had ſworn was broke into, did not ſtand in the pariſh of Blean, but in the Church Liberty; and upon Stone's being again queſ-

tioned, he acknowledged his houſe did ſtand in the Church Liberty, and not in Blean, as he had before ſworn. His Lordſhip then directed the Jury to diſcharge me.

On my return I went to work with Mr. Glover, in Mrs. Webb's wood, and continued to work during the ſummer with the greateſt induſtry, and earned a great deal of money. Mr. Dove, my late proſecutor, employed me at the end of the ſummer, to work in a wood which he looked after, and continued for five weeks, receiving on an average about 13s. a week. The wood being finiſhed, I had leave given to pick up what ſticks were ſcattered about, and after his ſon had taken away two load, I began to gather the remainder, and ſoon got a load, which I carried to Canterbury, and ſold for 15s. but before I could receive the money, I was purſued by Mr. Dove and another, who charged me with taking away ſome baker's wood belonging to a gentleman in the neighbourhood. They then re-loaded the waggon and drove it to the gentleman's houſe, meanwhile I ran off; and the ſame evening broke open Mr. Twyman's ſtable, from whence I ſtole a jacket and a pair of pumps. Sold the jacket for 2s. the pumps for 1s. 6d.

Going then to a match of running at Merſham,

ſham, I was taken by a conſtable, and carried before a Magiſtrate, who committed me to St. Dunſtan's gaol, 21ſt June, 1758, on the oath of John Dove, for ſtealing a load of wood, in which I declare there were not three faggots they could call their own.—At the enſuing Aſſizes I was tried, but it appearing I had leave to pick up the wood, the Judge directed the Jury to acquit me; and as ſoon as I came home, Mr. Twyman employed me in cutting of wheat, till Hopping, when I earned in a fortnight and three days, 56s. in picking of hops—Being well furniſhed with caſh, I got into company with ſome of my old female acquaintance at Michaelmas, on whom I ſpent all the money I had got.

Mr. Strood having at this time an old hay-ſtack to move, I went to help him; while I was work, Mrs. Underdown came there to ſpeak to Mrs. Pout, with whom ſhe lived; knowing their houſe was left without any one to watch it, I thought it a good opportunity to do a little buſineſs there; therefore inſtead of laying down at noon, which is cuſtomary, I went to the houſe, and opened the window by means of a pane being out, and got into the fore-room, and from thence up ſtairs, and ſtole thereout a coat and waiſtcoat belonging to Rich. Atwood, and two chequered ſhirts, which I brought ſafe off.

off.—I ſold the coat and waiſtcoat for half a guinea, and the ſhirts for 4s. Meeting Atwood the next day, he told me of the robbery, adding, he had no ſuſpicion of me, as he was certain I was not abſent from Strood's; beſides, if it had been me, he was ſure I ſhould have cleared the place. You may be aſſured, replied I, if it had been me, I ſhould not have gone off with ſuch few things.—Young S——d having had, at that time, a few words with his father, and going away, they had a ſuſpicion that it was he who had committed the robbery, and cauſed him to be apprehended and taken before a Magiſtrate, but not being able to prove any thing againſt him, he was ſent about his buſineſs. Mrs. Underdown I underſtood afterwards, was, on that account, turned out of her lodgings.

After that I ſtole ſeven couple and half of fowls at Mr. Neale's, Harbledown, and ſold them at Canterbury for 1s. 6d. a couple.

Making a little ſtay with my uſual companions till the caſh was gone, I repaired to Tyler Hill, and ſtole four geeſe from Edward Smith, but was ſoon after taken while carrying them off, and brought to trial at the Old Caſtle, Canterbury, on Tueſday the 13th of January, 1789, where I was found guilty,

and

and ſentenced to be tranſported for Seven Years.

As many poor ſervants and others have been very materially injured in their characters, and ſtill remain ſuſpected of being the perſons who have robbed their maſters, I hope this voluntary confeſſion of mine, will, in ſome meaſure, atone for the diſtreſs they have unavoidably ſuffered, and convince thoſe who have ſuſtained any loſs, of the impropriety, if not injuſtice, of uncharitably charging any perſon with a theft before it could be ſubſtantially aſcertained by the cleareſt and moſt poſitive truth. Wherever I found any thing of that nature, and thought an innocent p rſon would ſuffer, I have (where I could do it with ſafety to my own perſon) confeſſed the robbery, which is well known to many perſons whom I have robbed, inſtances of which are to be obſerved in this narrative.

I now beg leave to return my ſincere thanks to thoſe gentlemen before whom I have been ſo often tried, for that mercy and juſtice ſhewn to me on all occaſions;—to the principal inhabitants of Saints Coſmus and Damian, for their ready aſſiſtance in giving me work, and their earneſt endeavours to reclaim me;—of the public, I moſt humbly beg

beg their pardon for the numerous depredations I have committed on their property, and hope they will not caſt any reflections on my mother, my brothers, or ſiſter, on my account, as they did every thing in their power to make me live a ſober and honeſt life.

FINIS.

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